



# State Rehabilitation Council

Nebraska Department of Education  
301 Centennial Mall South • PO Box 94987 • Lincoln, NE 68509

## **Developmental Services of Nebraska**

2610 West M Court  
Lincoln, NE  
402-435-2800

February 14, 2006  
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

## **MINUTES**

Present: *Sharon Bloechle, Don Crouch, Linda Douglas, Gayle Hahn, Sandy Ham, Marc Hultine, David Jelinek, Les Kimmons, Kipp Ransom, Mark Schultz, and Merwyn Vavrina*

Absent: *Kim Boyce, Eileen Curry, Alvin Fox, Frank Lloyd, Mike Newman, Vicki Rasmussen, Susan Rocker, Pearl Van Zandt,*

Minutes by *Cheryle Adams*

Gayle Hahn called the meeting to order

I Public Comment: None

II. Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Les to approve agenda with changes. Dave seconded the motion.  
The motion carried, agenda approved.

III. Approval of Minutes from October 18, 2005

Motion made by Sharon to approve the October 18<sup>th</sup> minutes. Linda seconded the motion.  
Motion carried, agenda approved.

IV. Director's Report (*Margy Hoffmann*)

1. Frank is in Washington, DC attending a CSAVR-Council of State Administrator Vocational Rehabilitation meeting. This is a two-day meeting to discuss future directions of VR. They will be hearing from advocacy groups. Tomorrow on the 15th they will be meeting with state directors to discuss initiatives and what VR should pursue.

CSAVR is also working at a congressional level for Rehabilitation Early Diversion; working with people who come in to apply for social security disability. They would have an opportunity to get a living wage and receive immediate medical coverage. They would work with VR to get employment and may never have to go on social security disability.

This is the second year that VR has been waiting for the Workforce Investment Act to be reauthorized. The house has passed the bill, but it is now waiting in the senate. It is our understanding that there are no disagreements among the senators, but Senator Durbin from Illinois is not willing to pass it unanimously. They could be starting all over with a new bill next year. Funding has not been impacted by this; in fact there has been a 2.46% increase. VR is a mandatory program and the current budget cuts don't affect Voc Rehab.

2. Frank and Margy just finished traveling to each VR office. They go twice a year and meet with each of the 14 VR teams. The last two years in the fall they met with staff individually with Mel Bargas participating. This year they started their rounds in October. They have a set of questions they ask that center around the different aspects of the program. They listen to the responses of staff, getting input as to what is working/not working. Committees have been established to analyze some of the issues.
3. VR is emphasizing production goals; focusing on federal standards and indicators,. VR is required by feds to meet certain standards and indicators, including how many people you rehabilitate. VR must rehabilitate more people than the previous year. Due to order of selection VR serves the most severely disabled first, trying to put them to work earning a viable wage.
4. VR is also working on expanding transition services to students 14 and older, putting more attention on serving younger students. The Department of Education is currently working on including in Rule 10 that all students have a career and learning plan. VR will work together with schools on getting a career plan in place. Jack will present more about this initiative to the council in the future. Jack is currently employed by VR 90%. Jack will go to the schools to look at the various school programs and get input.
5. VR is also focusing on those with Traumatic Brain Injuries. How is VR serving people across this spectrum? VR is looking at services available in the various communities and how they can be of assistance.
6. Placement—CSAVR has developed a national employment network. They are working with employers on a national level for job placement and hope that those that have businesses in the various states are contacting VR first looking for employees. VR is reviewing how placement services are organized and what direction to pursue in the future.
7. The Assistive Tech Partnership (ATP). How does VR use ATP as a resource and is VR using this resource to the degree it could be used. Mark Schulz will be visiting the 14 teams to discuss all the programs they have and how they can work with VR. Assistive Tech works with the Medicaid waiver, provides services for independent living and works in the housing area. Assistive Technology is able to leverage dollars from other programs. They have started—managing a housing website with the goal to have affordable housing for folks with disabilities.

VR will focus on three areas this year:

Transition, working with kids at an earlier age.

Second will be placement and the national employment network. A placement committee of four office director's and four placement specialists has been established. VR needs to look at the partnerships we have with employers and job availability. How does VR get this information to consumers? Marketing the employers to our consumers instead of the other way around. There is a need for certain types of skills depending on which part of the state the consumer is located. If VR knows what is available in the area, the consumer might be interested in those types of jobs. VR has 23 staff committed to placement.

The third area is the continuing work on the front end process and the IPE booklet. Emphasis will be on the employment discussion. We are looking at how to give and get the information so both the consumer and VR end up on the same page at the end of the meeting. The intent of the employment discussion is for the consumer to understand what VR might be able to do for them and for VR to understand why that person came to them. The consumer must be assured VR has heard what they have to say and that the consumer understands how VR is able to help them. At the end of the meeting a summary is written by the consumer & staff members documenting the discussion and it is given to the consumer. It is the consumer's program and they should be directing it.

The agency had 8 teams that achieved 100% of their goal this year. Employment outcomes totaled 1419 with last year's at 1266. There were 331 employment warranty outcomes and 195 transition outcomes in addition to the 1419 employment outcomes. This gave us a total of 1945 outcomes this year.

Another area VR is working on is redeveloping the external website. There is a committee reviewing what is currently on the site. We are working with staff to determine what information should be available on the site.

VR is also working on updating various publications. Sandy distributed the new placement brochure. This is intended to go to employers highlighting VR's services. The committee is working on developing a brochure that speaks to consumer about VR's services.

The second brochure Sandy distributed is the "general brochure". This has the overview of our agency with basic info about the services VR provides. This brochure can be given to anyone and is based on the three themes of preparing getting jobs, and keeping jobs. Sandy is working on developing some new tabletop displays. These will have a similar look/language. We will carry this over to the website.

Sandy distributed the printer's proof of the third brochure, the transition brochure. She also reported on the progress of the annual report. She is doing the final proof and will have the finished report by the end of March.

The newsletter "Quality Employment Solutions" is getting a new look. The masthead will look the same, but the format will be a bit different. There will be a dual focus, doing a consumer story with an employer featured on the cover and a second consumer story will be blended into the rest of the newsletter, tying everything together.

VR has received the monitoring report from the Rehabilitation Services Administration, but we haven't had a chance to review it in detail. Staff from Rehabilitation Services Administration will be coming out to visit the state agency and SILC sometime before the end of September for a week.

They would also like to meet with SRC members and some VR consumers. They want to get a feel for the types of services and consumers that come to VR in Nebraska.

There is a committee working on Employment Warranty, these are consumers who have successfully completed the program. The committee is looking at the consumers needs, trying to determine if more services are needed in this area to help them stay successfully employed. VR does a follow-up after they have successfully exited the program, then they are contacted at 3 months, 6 months, 12 months, 2 years and 3 years. In visiting with teams about this, it is quite a workload. A committee has been established to really look at this program.

Don recommends that the committee secure an outside source to do the monitoring; hire a client or ex-staff member. It was suggested doing the follow-up for two years, then sending a newsletter out the third. The placement people have access to good job information. Somehow this information needs to keep flowing to the Employment Warranty folks. The monitoring has recently been done by the associates. They are the ones making contact. They contact the consumer and ask questions to determine if they need additional help. This is not a federal requirement Nebraska VR feels this is the right thing to do.

Another area under review is the self-employment program. The program has been available for the last five years and is especially needed in the rural areas. VR had a self-employment provider, Wayne Miller, who has moved out of Nebraska. He would look at the feasibility of idea, evaluate how the person would work in that job area and does it make sense for the community? He worked closely with everyone tying it all together. VR has interviewed Patti Lind—private not to profit. She works with Iowa's VR. VR has been talking to some agencies one being—REAP. We need an outside vendor to work with us. VR staff don't have the skills or back ground to work in area of self-employment. It will be 2-3 months before VR has made a decision and set up a new provider.

Biggest problem with REAP in the past was that no one wanted to do the feasibility study and give recommendation to the team. Reap has indicated they would do that if we contract with them. The person we contract with needs the self-employment background as well as have the business ability to help people to go for loans. Finding the funding sources is really important.

## V. Old Business

### A. Display of SRC Website (*Cheryle Adams*)

The address for the Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council is [www.vocrehab.state.ne.us](http://www.vocrehab.state.ne.us).

The list of contents is:

SRC Role

Meeting dates

Upcoming Agenda—updated once agenda is set

Current Members—has roster of the current members

Becoming a Member

Minutes—note: minutes from the last meeting is not put on the site till the council gives approval

Annual Reports

Contact Us

Vocational Rehabilitation

2003 Customer Relations Survey

B. Showing of RCEP/VR Videos (*Don Crouch*)

Les and Sharon viewed a couple of the videos provided by RCEP before the meeting. They felt that it would be of more value to new committee members. The presentations are: History of VR, Policy, Rehabilitation Act and Role of SRC. It was suggested that new members view the one on the History of VR and then select one of the other presentations.

VI. New Business

A. New Consumer PowerPoint Presentation (*Don Crouch*)

Don discussed orientation for the new consumer. When VR gets a referral, they are scheduled for orientation. A formal orientation presentation has been developed so that everyone participating will hear the same things, a consistent message. There are three formats: PowerPoint for groups—used in larger offices, the smaller offices will use the flip chart where the consumer and staff member can sit across from each other and go through the flip chart. The third is a set of transparencies. There is a set in each office to be used in case the computer breaks down, or a projector isn't available. The orientation presentation is tied to the "new consumer folder." It is also available in Spanish

B. Poverty Training (*Margy Hoffmann*)

Margy gave an overview of the training the VR Leadership attended on poverty. The training was excellent. Ruby Paine, the presenter is nationally known for her information on working with people in poverty. She has written several books on this subject. Training events have been held in the central part of the state by people who have been trained by Ruby Payne. This training was paid for out of the HHSS Infrastructure grant for Ticket to Work. Margy felt that staff should have this information in order to successfully serve people in poverty. Ruby presented information about people in poverty and talked about the experiences they have that the middle class population doesn't. VR, employers and the workplace are strongly middle class institutions. Margy commented that a child of three years from a professional family has more vocabulary than the average adult person in poverty. It is assumed that the consumer knows the "hidden" rules of the middle class. Ruby discussed issues that people of poverty deal with on a daily basis. How can our staff communicate and assist this group of people? Vicki Rasmussen indicated that she better understood some of the CAP complaints after she had attended this training

Those in poverty value relationships and entertainment. The middle class values achievement and responsibility. VR is looking at some of the processes in order to communicate effectively with those consumers that are living in poverty. Margy commented she thought this information would benefit staff at the fall conference.

VI. New Business

A. Annual report progress (*Sandy Ham*)

Sandy is doing the final proof and will have the finished report shortly. She would like to have it mailed out before the end of March

B. Don's report on RSA monitoring.

The Rehabilitation Services Administration in Washington D.C. is responsible for monitoring our program. We just received the monitoring report from reviews they completed in FY 2004. This information will be distributed for the April SRC meeting and we will discuss it at that time.

RSA also sent out information in general about the monitoring they will be doing. In the past monitoring was done by our Regional office in Kansas City but the regional offices have all been closed. RSA has decided to do the monitoring with RSA staff from Washington D. C.

They will be sending out staff to spend a week in Nebraska sometime this year. The purpose is mainly to meet staff, discuss FY2004 and FY2005 results and discuss concerns state staff might have. During that week they will make contact with key persons in the SRC as well.

They also intend to be involved with SRCs on a continuing basis and provide technical training to SRC members.

Lastly, they will begin on-site monitoring again in FY 2007.

C. Going To Work Forums

There are four up-coming forums to be held in April. These are called 'Going To Work'. Tim Kolb is putting this together with funding through the Ticket to Work Infrastructure grant for Nebraska.

The forums have two purposes. First is to provide information to individuals who are receiving SSDI or SSI about the incentives that can help them go to work. The second part is to provide information to employers around the incentives to hire individuals with disabilities.

Forums begin at 9:00 am and end at 4:00 pm.

April 4, 2006: Holiday Inn Central Omaha

April 11, 2006: Ramada Inn Kearney

April 18, 2006: Sandhills Convention Center (Quality Inn & Suites) North Platte

April 25, 2006: Hampton Inn Scottsbluff

These are open to the public and you are more than welcome to attend.

VII. Reports

A. CAP Report (*Vicki Rasmussen*)

No report

B. SILC Report (Alvin Fox)

No report

C. ATP Report (*Mark Schultz*)

The Telework loan program is operated through Easter Seals. The program has had a tough time getting started. A total of five loans have been made totaling over \$30,000. Twenty to twenty-five states have these loan programs in place. Nebraska ranked 3rd in the nation to these types of loans being made.

Mark discussed the Tech connectors website. This new website is AT4ALL.com. The site lists all kinds of computer equipment that is being recycled for loan to consumers. The equipment can be used either at home or the work site. Demonstrations of the equipment are available. Consumers can search for equipment by looking for specific items, categories, etc. Items can be bookmarked or saved. A consumer will need to be a registered user. This should be available on VRIS. Looking to use this on a national level. Hoping to involve other states and search for equipment across the borders.

The new housing website has only been up for several weeks. Location is: [housing.ne.gov](http://housing.ne.gov). Landlords can list their property here. Landlords complete a questionnaire to provide property information. Landlords aren't screened and it is made clear upfront that the consumer needs to be aware of this.

This will help locate housing for those that are disabled at an affordable cost. This is only for rental properties and not all properties are accessible. Mark stated that locating and tracking those units have been a problem. The consumer can log into the site and have several ways to search for properties. The site also links to other partners and is also in Spanish. Mark stated that if a city lists less than 30 properties, all properties will come up.

There are no restrictions as to whom can list a property right now and all housing authorities across the state are involved with this site. The site has a key to help with descriptions and consumers can access a map to show them where the property is located.

Economic Development is working on a marketing campaign. The site will be available March 1st with a special event to promote it. Billboards, and other media forms will be used to get the word out. There are no fees associated with maintaining the site, with it costing under \$20,000 annually to maintain. There are several partners that will help with the funding.

D. Committee Reports

1. Client Services Committee (*Les Kimmons*)

The Client Services Committee spent time discussing the one carryover item from July. The issue was; How to update the customer service satisfaction survey to include the impact and value of the Individual Personal Employment (IPE) booklet as well as client satisfaction report items like "Did VR help you find a job?" and "Are you still working at that job?" , etc. The Committee talked about narrowing this down to postcard

questionnaire size. In the meantime, great things have been done to modify booklet and it has been condensed into 44 pages. They are really looking at what this booklet can do and how it can help with employment. Did the book assist with getting the job?, etc. The committee will put the survey questions on line to will try to narrow it down to 8 questions. It will be relevant as to the value of book. How is it effective when working with individuals and is it saving the teams time and effort? VR has been using booklet for only two months.

The committee plans to put something together and then will make a recommendation to VR.

## 2. Employer Services Committee (*Eileen Curry*)

The committee will be requesting information out of QUEST, going back a few years. They are looking at data of individuals that have been closed successful and are employed. They are gathering names of employers that VR has had success with in employing consumers. Using this information they will come back with some strategies.

## 3. Transition Services Committee (*Jack Sheppard*)

This year there were 10 new requirements identified for team working with students. The requirements are attached. Some are things we will do in partnership with the schools.

There will be a transition round table discussion to be held the end of March with VR staff. This will be a 1½ day meeting with all the teams involved sharing their most effective transition activities, addressing those minimum requirements. They will break into small groups to discuss critical issues.

They are planning on conducting a survey to be completed by the schools regarding their perception of how the VR offices are doing. What's working and what is not. They have discussed having meetings with a smaller group of parents/educators to get input on how VR can be more effective. Then later conduct a more formal survey.

The new requirements have been out there less than a year so doing the survey at this time would be of minimum benefit.

A transition piece will be available once the website is redeveloped. This will be available to students, parents and educators. Transition folks have been asked for their input as to what they want on the website.

The Transition Resource Guide is almost complete and should be out to the printers shortly. This is information that Shari and Marci developed. Staff will take it and make it work for their situation, making changes according to their needs.

There will be several transition fairs to be held this spring in Omaha, Fremont, and the tri-state—Kearney/GI/Hastings.



Motion made by Marc Hultine to adjourn the meeting. Mark Schultz seconded the motion. The motion carried, meeting adjourned.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 11, 2006 at Country Inn & Suites, Lincoln, Nebraska.